PITTSBURGH FAN FORUM

NO. 15/16

PRESENTS...

HUMOR!

PITTSBURGH FAN FORUM Jan.-Feb., 1976
The Bulletin Of The Pittsburgh Comix Club No. 15/16
Publisher: Benjamin Pondexter / 827 Anaheim St. / Pittsburgh, Pa. 15219
Editor: Mark Lerer / 107 Woodland Dr. / Pittsburgh, Pa. 15228
Subscriptions: $4.00 per year (6 issues). Ads: $5.00 per full page per issue.
All comics characters are copyrighted©their respective publishers.

Club Affairs:

Next Meetings: The PCC next meets on Saturday, February 14, at 6:30 PM at Greg Eide's comics shop, 636 Butler St., Route 8, in Etna. This will be the last meeting before PITTCON '76, so everyone in the area who's attending the con, please make it to the meeting!

PITTCON '76 Progress Report:

(Yet another regular report on Pgh.'s second annual comics convention.) William M. Gaines has told us that he'll be unable to attend the con, as he'll be out of the country at the time. However, all the other guests, with Rich Buckler, have confirmed-- that's Roy Thomas, Len & Glynis Wein, Marv Wolfman, Jim Shooter, Ben Ruiz and Howard Bender. Not a bad lot, hm?

There's still a chance to register a dealer table, but the price of each tabel is now $20. for the three days of the con.

See you all there at Duquesne University on March 12-14, 1976 (information flyers will be available at the next meeting, or from Ben Pondexter)!

S.F. Help: Member Marc A. Cerasini wants help from interested PCC-ers in getting Harlan Ellison's science fiction film, "A Boy And His Dog," in Pittsburgh. Says Marc, Cinemette Co. will not bring it without an expressed interest. Write to both Cinemette Co. / Fulton Bldg. / Pgh., Pa. 15222 and Ross Wheeler Films / 107 6th St. / Room 628 / Pgh., Pa. 15222.

Exhibit: Our comics display at Hillman Library at Pitt U. has been so successful, that Community College wants us to do one for them!! The show started January 26, to run for three weeks, so you can probably still catch it, if you're lucky enough to know the way down there. The art of Carl Barks, Neal Adams, Berni Wrightson, and Gene Colan, among many others, is part of the whole bit. One week after the show will be presented a videotaped address given by Club President Gentle Ben Pondexter. Incidentally, the gent's name (that we forgot last issue) who's been a great support is Richard Filnagel (now, we'll probably have the spelling wrong...!)

Miscellany: Congrats to member Jim Shooter! Jim's newest job is Assistant Editor (or is is "associate?") at Marvel Comics! And we had him first! ****Not only is COMIX & FANDOM #2 now available for $1, but issue #3 (being coedited by Dave Mosser and Harold Cupec) is on the way. Contributions? ****We're wroking on two new sketchbooks (remember that our early publication, the Conan Sketchbook, is still around), and we'd like everyone who draws (draws well, that is) to participate, Send your art of either The Shadow or Spiderman in to Gentle Ben. Better yet, send in art of both! *** DC PUBLISHER CARMINE INFANTINO WAS JUST FIRED! DETAILS LATER!

* * *

On Humor

by Howard P. Siegel

The comic books of the late thirties offered a variety of features, and said so by the banners on their covers. "Action-Mystery-Humor." It was that last offspring that told us about the contribution newspaper strips made. While the superhero has always held the backbone of comic books, humor has been the nucleus of the comics page. It gets threatened for top position, as it is currently, but always manages to survive. So it has been with the costumed adventurer: the fifties, the early seventies. But look what's happening today. The sine curve has gone full cycle and both major publishers are opening the throttles full for the guys in capes and masks. In the daily newspaper, the opposite is happening. The Doonesburies are popping up rather frequently, tinged with political overtones and using the front pages for subject matter, while the likes of Brenda Starr, On Stage, and others are hard put to stay in business. Is it because the public has tired of soap operas? Or is it because they must have a message brought to them about today's harsh times in a package that softens reality?

Few liked the Korean War; nobody wanted the Viet Nam conflict. Terry died because of the latter, and Beetle Baily became popular during it. Humor won; seriousness lost. Blacks abhor the tokenism of Marvel's and DC's black superheroes and give hazzahs to the likes of Lt. Flap. Again, humor is acceptable; reality plus is condemned. The political cartoons speak for themselves and also prove the point.

Another example of humor's contribution to comic books is the show business personality glorified in caricature. Bob Hope, Martin & Lewis, and even "I Love Lucy" enjoyed healthy careers in comic books. Charlton banks heavily on the portrayal of television actors in their 1975-76 line. And who starred for a spell in All-American Comics? None other than "Mutt And Jeff," the first newspaper strip that had day-to-day continuity circa 1906! Didn't Ma Hunkle make it to the Justice Society? And do we really take Howard The Duck seriously despite his extra-terrestrial origin? Do you get yourself into a relaxed, mellow mood on Sunday morning by reading Prince Valiant or Hagar The Horrible first? Don't answer. Humor won out again, right? Comic books of that genre may not be the biggest sellers, but they are consistent profit-makers. Ask Harvey and Archie. And didn't a smattering of humor make the difference between hit and miss for Plastic Man and the "original" (That word gets me. As if there could ever be a doubt when referring to the Big Red Cheese) Captain Marvel? Captain America wasn't as interesting in years as when he tripped over his own cape in the guise of Nomad, adding a touch of long suspected truth for the reader.

Institutions have been built by humor in comic books. MAD magazine, the classic example, is the sole product of a publishing company. A Bill Gallo caricature on the cover of Sports Illustrated or a Jack Davis ad for the Federal Energy Board delivers the message. Superman has never enlisted a teenager for the Air Force. It doesn't take an overabundant amount of artistic talent to become a successful humor cartoonist, but it takes all you've got, and much more to put it over in funny terms on a two-dimensional page.

I'm glad PFF chose humor as this issue's theme. It gave me the opportunity to air its importance in the comic book world. I've still got my Mickey Mouse Club hat but got rid of my Batman bubble gum cards long ago....

* * *

The Comic Poll

by Neil Renton.

Well, this time around, five people participated. Let's hear from all of you next time!

What were your favorite comics of the past month or so? Send me a list of comic titles and ratings (1-10, a "1" being garbage, a "10", perfect) Results will be posted Next issue.

Here are last poll's best comic books (rating, title, no. of raters):

9.5 HOWARD THE DUCK #1 (2)

9.0 DR. STRANGE #12 (3)
THE INHUMANS #2 (2)
SWAMP THING #21 (2)

8.9 MARVEL PRESENTS #3 (4)

8.7 MARVEL SUPER ACTION #1 (2)

8.5 CONAN #59 (2)
JUNGLE ACTION #20 (2)

8.0 HULK #196 (2)
ALL STAR COMICS #58 (2)
AMAZING ADVENTURES #35 (2)

7.7 WARLOCK #11 (3)
THOR #245 (2)

7.5 S. S. O. CONAN #10 (2)

7.2 ASTONISHING TALES #34 (4)
X-MEN #97 (4)

7.0 FANTASTIC FOUR #167 (4)
DEFENDERS #32 (3)

Last poll, I asked you to vote for your three favorite comic book artists:

2 votes: Neal Adams, Will Eisner
1 vote: C.C. Beck, John Buscema, Steve Ditko, Jack Kirby, Russ Manning, John Romita, Jim Starlin

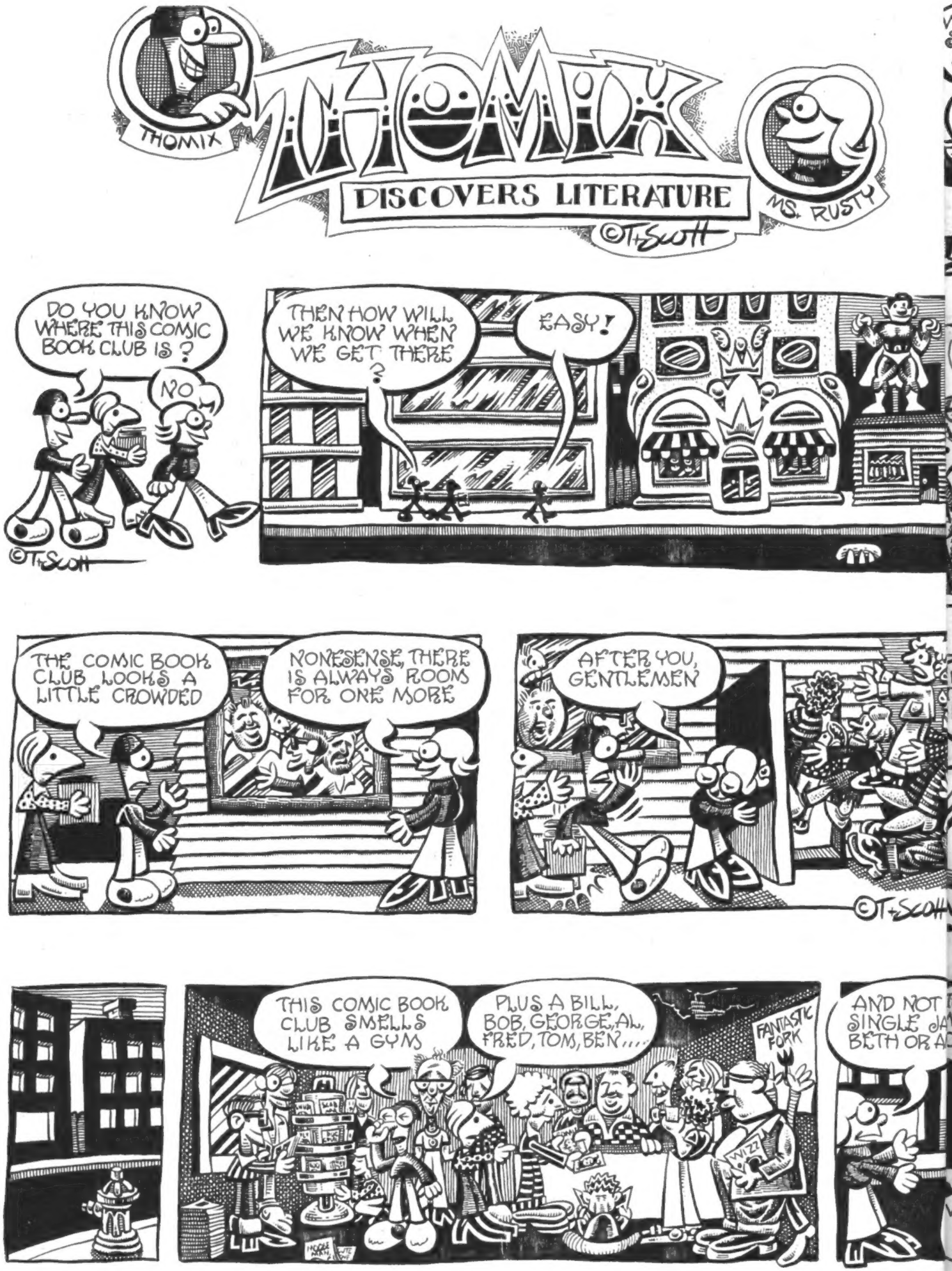
I am also in charge this year of the Pittsburgh Fan Awards. This year's ballot will be distributed at PITTCON '76. We'll be voting for the fan artist in the club whom we think is the finest. If you are an artist, and so would like your name on the ballot, please write me (or tell me at a meeting). Thank you.

Please participate in next month's poll! Give your lists to me at the next meeting, or mail them to Neil Renton / 2616 Lindenwood Dr. / Upper St. Clair, Pa. 15241.

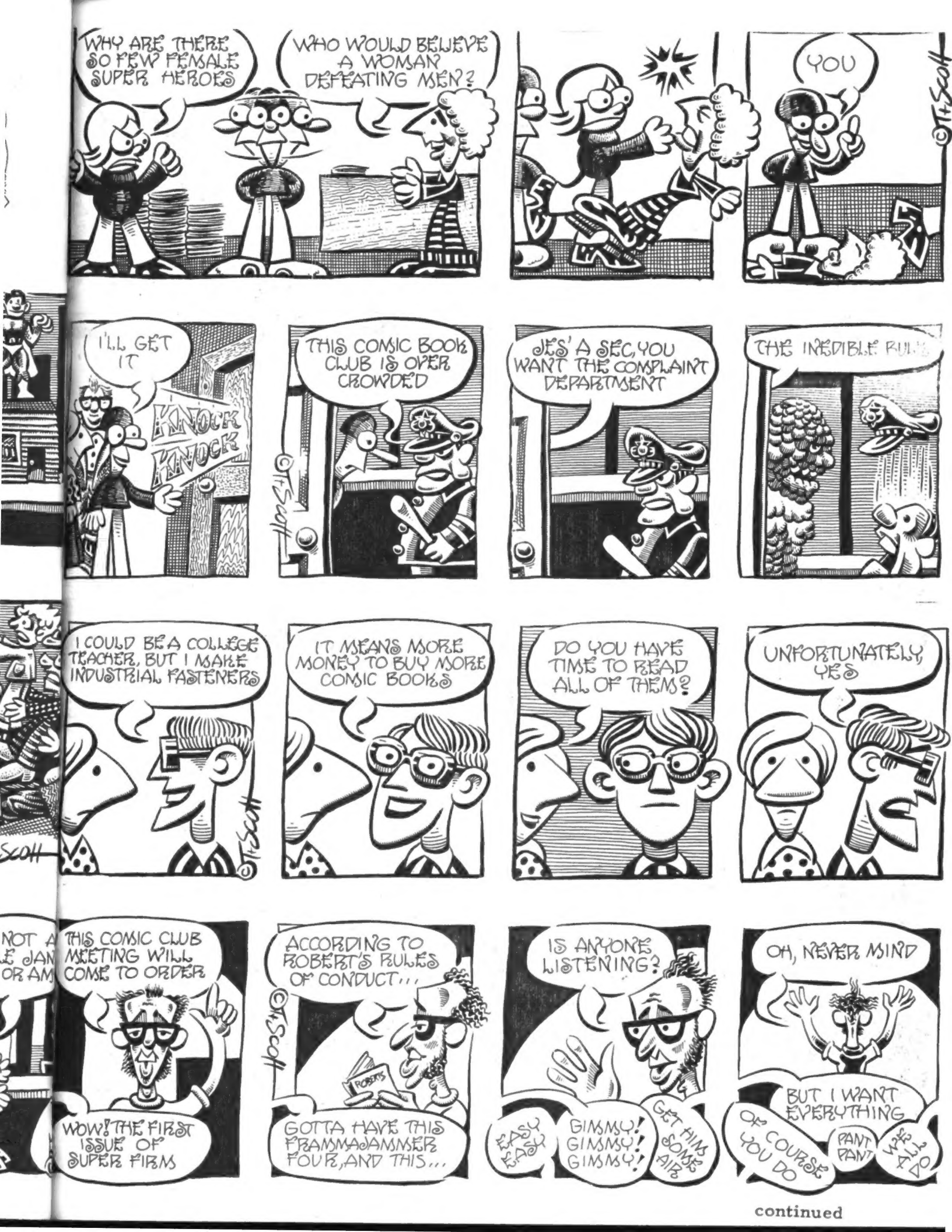
Follow the form below:

Comic Title _____ Rating _____

* * *


THOMIX
DISCOVERS LITERATURE
MS. RUSTY
©T+Scott
DO YOU KNOW WHERE THIS COMIC BOOK CLUB IS?
NO
©T+SCOTT
THEN HOW WILL WE KNOW WHEN WE GET THERE?
EASY!
THE COMIC BOOK CLUB LOOKS A LITTLE CROWDED
NONESENSE, THERE IS ALWAYS ROOM FOR ONE MORE
AFTER YOU, GENTLEMEN
©T+SCOTT
THIS COMIC BOOK CLUB SMELLS LIKE A GYM
PLUS A BILL, BOB, GEORGE, AL, FRED, TOM, BEN....
FANTASTIC FORK
AND NOT A SINGLE JANET BETH OR ACOMES

continued


WHY ARE THERE SO FEW FEMALE SUPER HEROES
WHO WOULD BELIEVE A WOMAN DEFEATING MEN?
YOU
©T+Scott
I'LL GET IT
KNOCK KNOCK
THIS COMIC BOOK CLUB IS OVER CROWDED
©T+Scott
JES' A SEC, YOU WANT THE COMPLAINT DEPARTMENT
THE INEDIBLE BUL
I COULD BE A COLLEGE TEACHER, BUT I MAKE INDUSTRIAL FASTENERS
©T+Scott
IT MEANS MORE MONEY TO BUY MORE COMIC BOOKS
DO YOU HAVE TIME TO READ ALL OF THEM?
UNFORTUNATELY, YES
THIS COMIC CLUB MEETING WILL COME TO ORDER
WOW! THE FIRST ISSUE OF SUPER FIRMS
ACCORDING TO ROBERT'S RULES OF CONDUCT...
©T+Scott
ROBERTS
GOTTA HAVE THIS FRAMMAJAMMER FOUR, AND THIS...
IS ANYONE LISTENING?
EASY EASY EASY
GIMMY! GIMMY! GIMMY!
GET HIM SOME AIR
OH, NEVER MIND
BUT I WANT EVERYTHING
OF COURSE YOU DO
PANT PANT
WE ALL DO

continued

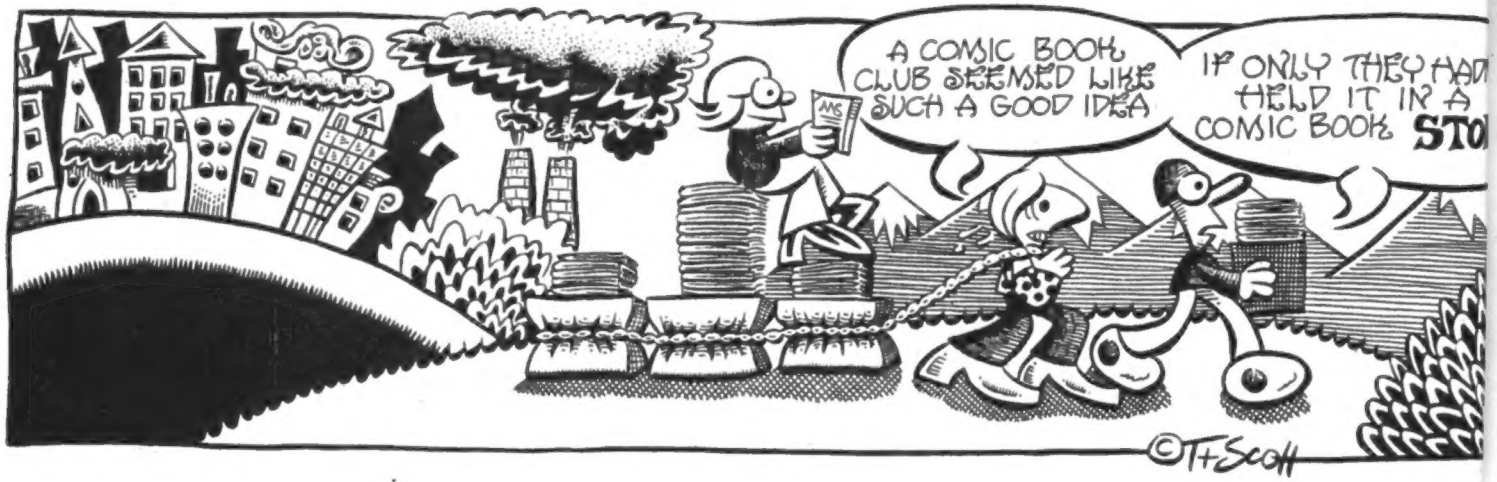
©T+Scott
GIVE YOUR NAME AND WHAT COMIC YOU COLLECT
GEORGE- SUPER HEROES
MARK-SWORD AND SORCERY
AL-PULPS
RUSTY- SI-FI
EDGY- UNDER-GROUNDS
PRIVT AMERICA

THIS COMIC IS TERRIBLE. LOOK HOW DULL THE THE COLORS ARE

IT'S VALUED AT $5000

SUDDENLY, IT LOOKS MUCH BETTER
©T+Scott

A LITTLE GRE
ALWAYS BRIGHT
THE PICTURE


A COMIC BOOK CLUB SEEMED LIKE SUCH A GOOD IDEA
IF ONLY THEY HAD
HELD IT IN A COMIC BOOK
STO
©T+Scott

* * *

Concluding the series begun in PFF #12.

Whatever happened to Baby Atlas ?
by David Finger

Part III The Final Curtain

"Where's Jeff? " I asked of Ric Meyers.

"He's no longer with Atlas. "

"Did he quit ? Was he fired? "

"It's a sticky situation. He and Chip were having frequent arguments. Finally, Jeff quit but Chip wouldn't let him go because he was under contract. Fianlly, Chip had to fire him. "

"What about Steve Mitchell? "

" Same. I think I'm next to go. "

"Why? "

"I don't do enough around here. At least that's the excuse that they give. "

Ric's words were prophetic. A little over a week later he called and told me he was fired. I didn't know what to expect next. When I next went up to the Atlas offices, Alan Kupperberg had become production manager and Shelly Lefferman was Larry Lieber's new editorial assistant. Books were being dropped. "We're making changes. Jeff Rovin put out books for entertainment, but they had no direction. We're giving our characters direction" was the general word. However, the direction taken was down and eventually out. Soon, though, another face arrived on the scene: Dave Kraft, who had served as Don McGregor's assistant at Marvel, became Larry Lieber's assistant, with Shelly Lefferman switching to production work. But books continued to be axed. Soon Dave Kraft disappered from Atlas and (until recently) from the comic book scene entirely. Everyone knew the end was in sight.

I overheard a discussion in which Chip Goodman told Alan Kupperberg to move the "TM" in the banner from after "Atlas" to after "Comics:"

"But yesterdayyou told me to put the 'TM' after 'Atlas.'"

"I did? "

"Yeah. We were trade-marking 'Atlas,' not 'Comics.'"

'Oh. "

Finally the day came. I went up to 717 Fifth Avenue and Atlas was no more. Larry, Shelly, and Alan were all gone. No one was surprised. Everyone had their own theory why, but most agreed that Atlas deserved to die.

The unfortunate thing is that few of the talented men swept up by Atlas are no longer working in adventure comics. Larry Hama has done a few Ka-Zar stories, and others are slowly drifting back, but where are people like Sal Amendola and Pat Broderick? Will we ever see them in adventure books again?

With that, the story of Atlas is complete. But what stories behind the comics industry would you like to read about? Because of my position (Dave is a reporter for the newszine, The COMIC READER --Ed.), realize that there are a number of things I can't talk about, but there are things about which I can. Send your suggestions to Mark Lerer, who'll forward them to me.

* * *

An Interview with William M. Gaines

(The following interview was given by Mark Lerer for the Pittsburgh Comix Club on July 4, 1975, at the New York Comic Art Convention. The interview lasted about a half-hour, and has been transcribed by Mark Lerer.)

ML: The first topic is EC. EC was the first comic book company that had fans for the company, as opposed to for artists or writers or characters. It was the first one that gathered its own fandom. In the beginning, was this intentional? Did you deliberately try to generate a feeling for EC from the readers?

WMG: Well, no more so than any other comic book outfit. I think all outfits try to. They all have their distinctive emblem, whether "DC" or "AA" or "Marvel," and they all try to get a certain amount of loyalty on the basis of having the readers read all their books. We didn't consciously do it for any more reasons than that. I think one reason we were more successful was that we had a very small line. We never had more than ten bimonthly titles. Now that in comics is a very small line. We kept it small because it was a very personal thing, and we did it ourselves. We simply couldn't handle any more. Feldstein and I handled seven of the books and Kurtzman ultimately ended up with three. Neither one of us ever handled more.

ML: Yes, you've never been an expansionist. You've always tried to keep yourself within limits, even today with your single publication. Had you had the staff, or the time, or whatever, do you think EC could have benefitted more from more titles? Or don't you think there was much more to cover?

WMG: Well, that's hard to say. It's a style of doing business. I could not do business as a large corporation, because of the way I-- my own limitations. I'm the kind of person who likes to handle as much of what I'm doing personally as I can. When you get into large corporations, instead of doing things yourself, you have to be able to delegate authority to others. That's something I've never been able to do. That's a weakness of my part, as an executive.

ML: There's that famous quote of yours to Senator Estes Kefauver about bad taste. With the advantage of hindsight, an d seeing what's been done since with horror in comic books, do you still cling to your belief that EC -- for horror comics-- did not go outside the bounds of good taste ?

WMG: If you consider what's been done since, I believe it more than ever. Now I have nothing against bad taste; it's what you believe you personally want to do. We went as far as we felt we could go. To many people, that

continued

was way to far. To us, it wasn't.

ML: It's a cliche, but if you were to do it all over again, then would you have done the same things, and gone as far, or would you have channeled your horror into different directions?

WMG: That's a very if-y question. The stories which we published, again, were very personal things. They were our kinds of stories. We published for ourselves, not the reader. And, happily, the reader liked what we did. I don't know if I would be capable of turning out any other kinds of horror stories than the ones we did.

ML: What about Feldstein?

WMG: Feldstein is a very unusual person. He could do anything if given the direction. Anything you want, Feldstein can produce. In my case, what I wanted was what he produced. If someone else were in my place, he would have done an entirely different job. Whether it would have been better or worse, I don't know.

ML: Kurtzman was never like that, though.

WMG: No. Kurtzman worked on his own. There was no way I could influence what he did. After trying, I gave up because I knew it was hopeless. I also realized that what he was doing I had no feel for. I couldn't turn out TWO-FISTED TALES or FRONTLINE COMBAT to save my life. I had no feeling for that kind of story so the only thing I could do was give him credit.

ML: He hated horror comics. He really didn't want you to do them. What did he want you to do? Outside of his war books, and MAD, where did he want EC to go?

WMG: I don't know. It was never a matter of where-did-Kurtzman-want-EC-to-go. It was where-did-Kurtzman-want-Kurtzman-to-go. Where he wanted Kurtzman to go, Kurtzman went!

ML: And out of all that, developed MAD. A quote of yours is that "giving Harvey Kurtzman credit for MAD is like giving Robert Fulton credit each time a new ship is launched." How do you see Kurtzman's role in the success of MAD?

WMG: Kurtzman started MAD and MAD started out 95% Kurtzman. It developed a very loyal but small fandom. As long as Kurtzman remained in charge of MAD, our sales remained in the three-to-four hundred thousand category. And they were going nowhere when Kurtzman left. When Feldstein took over, he turned MAD into a mass media magazine. Now, you, as one of the elite comic book appreciators, may think that the Feldsteinian MAD is not as good as the Kurtzmanian MAD, and I won't argue whether it is or not.

continued

But the point remains that Feldstein's MAD sells up to two-and-a-half million copies an issue. And I firmly believe that Kurtzman's MAD never would have cracked the half-million mark.

ML: Why? Is Feldstein's more approach more general, and Kurtzman's more esoteric?

WMG: Yes.

ML: Is that why Kurtzman never seemed to want to handle anything more than his war books and MAD at EC?

WMG: I don't think that's quite accurate. Kurtzman, more than I, has the problem of being unable to delegate authority and having to do everything himself. How much can one man handle? He was handling the two war books. Feldstein in essence was putting out seven books. The only help he was getting from me was plots. Kurtzman was putting out two books in the same time. I gave him MAD figuring he could put this out very quickly, being a humor magazine and requiring no research. He could slip it in between the other two and increase his income 50% as a result. He was completely unable to handle it! So he ulti mately dropped both war books, beacuse he couldn't handle both MAD and the war books. Harvey has never been able to do a lot of things because he's a very careful craftsman and he tries to do things exactly right.

ML: Then he's as rotten a businessman as he has a reputation of being?

WMG: Oh, I'm sure. Everything he's everything he's ever been connected with from a business point of view, namely TRUMP, HUMBUG, and HELP!, has folded after appropriate lengths of time, TRUMP after two issues. HUMBUG lasted as long as it did because of the way he did HUMBUG--he paid his contributors in stock. So he was operating without having to pay his artists and writers, which makes it a lot easier to operate! And, of course, when the thing folded, everybody that got paid in stock got nothing for it. And some of the people, like, I think, Willy Elder, had put cash into it.

ML: So we now have Feldstein's MAD. A lot of people have claimed that Feldstein's MAD is stagnant, that it's doing the same thing now that it was doing five or ten years ago. How do you respond to that?

WMG: Five or ten years ago, if we had had the sex in MAD that we now have, we'd have been thrown off the stands. I think MAD is a much more mature magazine because we're able to get away with it. On the other hand, you have to understand that MAD is a product that is designed for-- well, it isn't designed but it ends up being read by a certain age group.

ML: What is the age group?

continued

WMG: I don't know because I don't take surveys. I would guess that the hard core age group is from age twelve through sixteen. Twelve-through-sixteen-year-olds keep coming and going. It's like saying Captain Kangaroo hasn't changed in the last twenty years; why should he? There are new people all the time.

ML: With the material, has there been any experimenting, or with the editorial policy?

WMG: No.

ML: It's done the same way.

WMG: That's right.

ML: Another thing about today's MAD: Frank Jacobs, in his biography of you, paints a very bizarre portrait of the way you run MAD. He says that you run the staff in a "happy family" type atmosphere. It's obviously successful--or do you think that running the office that way has anything to do with MAD's success?

WMG: What's the difference if it's successful or not-- it's the only way I can run a business. I did the same thing with EC as I've done with MAD. I've been criticised for being paternalistic, but I can't help it. That's the way it is. I've been successful with that system; I won't quibble about it. If I were a complete failure, I 'd say I'd better re-examine it.

ML: Another thing is: do you really have any competition? Most humor magazines in America are MAD imitations. Do they eat into your audience?

WMG: I think CRACKED is nibbling into my younger end, and of course, NATIONAL LAMPOON is nibbling into my older end. I think MAD used to sell-- let's say MAD sold to all the ten-to-twenty-year-olds; now we sell to most of the tens and maybe half of the twenties whereas we used to have more. Until the recent recession, MAD sales continued to grow anyway every year. I never concerned myself with the competition. We outsell CRACKED four or five to one. We outsell the LAMPOON about three to one, so at the moment, I'm not concerned.

ML: But MAD and LAMPOON are totally different sorts of magazines. They have a totally different format, they have advertising and you don't, and so on. So do you think people are buying one <u>instead</u> of the other?

WMG: I don't think they'd buy it because it's got a different format. I think they buy it because it's got a different type of subject matter. The LAMPOON sells sex -- with humor, -- it sells bad taste, it sells left politics, and MAD for the most part doesn't sell any of those. I'm not criticising LAMPOON, just stating what I think is the essential difference.

continued

That MAD is a grownup comic book and LAMPOON is really a magazine and one takes advertsing and one doesn't are minor matters. It's what kind of product you're talking about.

ML: What are you "selling?" You used that word in describing LAMPOON.

WMG: We're selling, number one, pure humor, such as our Don Martin stuff. Number two, we'll say the more gentle kinds of satire, with a little bit of, you should excuse the expression, morality, like you-shouldn't-smoke, or you-shouldn't-drink-too-much-hard-liquor, and you-shouldn't-use-drugs. Becuase we believe in it. Which is an indication of a generation gap. Up at the LAMPOON, I'm sure they use drugs and hard liquor because they believe in it. We're selling one thing and they're selling another. We're selling middle-of-the-road type politics and they're selling left politics.

ML: You said "we" don't believe in such things. Is that you?

WMG: Generally the staff. I don't think there is anyone on the staff-- first of all, there are no alcoholics. There were one or two but they hit the wagon and are gone. Almost no one on the MAD staff smokes. And, to the best of my knowledge, no one on the MAD staff uses drugs. So when I say "we," I'm talking about the MAD staff. These certainly aren't edicts that I've put down.

ML: Is there generally a MAD staff opinion on a lot of things?

WMG: The MAD staff opinion varies greatly on almost everything. Except those subjects. And I don't even say that that's the MAD staff opinion; I'm just stating facts. Almost all of us don't smoke, etc. That's not an opinion, just a fact.

ML: Ok. When you were bought out, I think first by National--

WMG: Just for the record, I was bought by Premiere who sold me to National who merged with Kinney who then changed its name to Warner.

ML: Thank you. When this happened, you fought very strongly for MAD's self-rule. And I think you're still the only company in the entire corporate mess that enjoys self-rule?

WMG: That's true.

ML: Was this because you didn't feel MAD could function any other way?

WMG: No. The only way I could run it were if I were running it. I made that very clear. And the time will come when they decide that it is more important to them to get rid of me and run it their way. They can't have it both ways.

continued

ML: As for the future of MAD, one thing that has been changing is that you've been getting new contributors. The whole process of contributing to MAD is interesting. How many new contributors do you find yourself getting say, in a year?

WMG: That we use, or that try?

ML: That you use.

WMG: Probably one or two. It's DeFuccio and Meglin's job, mostly. We're always looking for new talent. Let me put it another way: we're receptive to new talent. We have never looked for anybody. We sit back and people come to us. At the moment, we have all the artists we need. We don't really need new writers, but we're always delighted to take them. Most people that try to write for MAD fail, or they'll sell us one really terriffic piece, and then they can never come up with a second one. This is especially sad, because we get a hot new guy who comes up with a great thing, and then he comes up with shit; it's very depressing.

ML: How often does that happen?

WMG: Oh, every two or three years. I don't know if you remember "Billy Poobah," one of my very favorite early stories. Some guy sent in how different magazines and newspapers would handle the same story about Billy Poobah who fell down and scraped his knees. It was written by a guy, we used it, we were enthused about it, and we could never get another thing out of him worth publishing. And that sort of thing keeps happening.

ML: Before MAD goes to the printer, you look it over very carefully. How often do you have to send it back, that you want changes made? Or are you very satisfied with every issue?

WMG: I deliberately read it last, so if there's something I want changed, it's got to be something that I violently want changed. Or I wouldn't put the staff through the trouble because it's usually two days late when it gets to me. I would say that I request a change maybe once a year, and get talked out of it maybe two times out of three. I think a few years ago Wally Wood did a piece of art about the Catholic Church. I asked them to weaken it a little. Once they ran something about "You Know You're a Schmuck When...." Of course, schmuck is Yiddish for prick. And that scared the hell out of me. I said "Jesus Christ, we're really gonna get into trouble" and they talked me out of it, and they were right. Little things. Most of the time they talk me out of it.

ML: Well, that finishes everything I had wanted to ask--

WMG: Okay, gentlemen!

ML: Thank you.

* * *

FROM THE FILES OF **YOUHOUSE**

CENTRAL NATIONAL BUREAU
WSA
NO. 527

Robert Youhouse
321 Gumbert St.
Port Vue, Pa. 15133

Suggestion:

I just read Hobbies magazine for December, 1975. An article on authors' manuscripts told about writers saving their scratch copies of books, papers, etc. that were hand written in the original form with the additions, deletions, and corrections noted on the paper. That way one could compare it to the final form. In the case of typewritten copy, there may be erasures, additions, or deletions before the typed final copy. I can't wait to find out if Stan Lee still has the original copy of the manuscript for FANTASTIC FOUR #1. How about it, Stan ? Anyone want a copy of the original for this article?

I can imagine writers tearing their hair out for not saving their originals. Are you one of them? Is there a market for this kind of material? Will someone pay money for an author's manuscript? It may not be as valuable as original art, but the idea may have potential.

Note:

Just received a list of the horror and science fiction films to be broadcast on the CBS Late Movie during the current TV season:

"The Power" with George Hamilton and Suzanne Pleshette, "Beware Of The Blob" with Godfrey Cambridge, "Brotherhood of Satan" with Strother Martin, "Fearless Vampire Killers" with Sharon Tate, "Green Slime" with Robert Horton "Frogs" with Ray Milland, "Dr. Jekyll and Sister Hyde" with Ralph Bates, "Baron Blood" with Joseph Cotton and Elke Sommer, "Night Of The Lepus" with Stuart Whitman and Janet Leigh, "Earth II" with Tony Franciosa, and "Blacula" with William Marshall.

The only films that haven't been shown on TV before are "Brotherhood Of Satan," "Baron Blood," and "Blacula."

Next Issue: Starting a series on female comic book characters.

* * *

Sure-Fire Comic Book Dialogue compiled by M. L.

"Perhaps this is my DESTINY-- the one thing I was BORN to do!"

"If only I could hold her in my ARMS... TELL her how much I LOVE her! But I can't-- can't...!"

"And I've got to do it.....NOW!!"

"I've never **SEEN** him more grim-- more intense-- more resolute!"

"The STRAIN-- it's almost too MUCH--!"

"A pity, Legionnaires, that all your vaunted strength is useless against ME!"

"Precisely, Spider-Man!"

"Inconsequential DUST MOTE! I am POWER! I am EVIL INCARNATE!"

"Can nothing STOP him??"

"Must hang on! Mustn't quit NOW-- when it counts the most!"

"Super-powers-- If I ever needed you, I need you NOW!"

"I-- I've failed-- failed...!"

"But-- you're DEAD! I saw you committed to the grave!"

"That punch could've knocked out an ELEPHANT! But you're STILL STANDING!"

"I'm cutting out!"

"Just a little further-- GOT IT!"

"Yeah, but what do ya do for an ENCORE?"

"NO! I'm coming WITH you-- I insist, my darling!"

"And I won't rest until I END his menace-- FOREVER!"

"He knocked those cars around as if they were cardboard!"

"Only my SUPER-STRENGTH can save us now!"

"It can't end this way!"

"...we dare not even THINK about it!"

"He must be stopped! And it's up to US! The only QUESTION is-- HOW?"

"By the gods--!"

* * *

Whatever Happened To Comics?

© Laurie L. "Rusty" Duraney

Of late, I have been persuing the comic sections of the local newsstands, and have discovered a peculiar circumstance. While the racks were filled with magazines classified as comics, there were very few comics.

What is she talking about, you ask. This: I found superheroes, swords-and-sorcery, fantasy, occult, love-stories, and a few grisly horror magazines with four-color pictures and very little narrative on every page; black-and-white so-called humor magazines with pictures and very little narrative on every page; the National Lampoon, which I will not even grace with the title "humor magazine," and its imitators; but no comics. Comics? You know, funnies, words and pictures that make you laugh. I found Richie Rich, Caspar The Friendly Ghost, Mickey Mouse, and Donald Duck, but even they were too busy having adventures to be very funny.

Is it that I have lost my sense of innocence, that I can find nothing to make me laugh? Or is it that the comic industry has lost its collective sense of humor? That it has found it more lucrative to amaze, horrify, and indulge the pseudo-erotic fantasies of its audience? The latter seems more plausible, for I do indeed still find humorous comics outside of the Marvel and DC publishing empires.

Though most of them died with the onset of the Second Depression, and despite Stan Lee's attempt to co-opt them, there are a few undergrounds still around. Even fewer are humorous. You will have to look long and far to find Dan O'Neill's "Odd Bodkins," but it will be worth the effort if you are in need of a good laugh at yourself, your society, and the world at large. I am not going to criticize O'Neill's work here, but I do suggest you make the effort to obtain the comics, read them yourself, and make up your own mind.

The only overground comic I've found amusing, aside from a mild wonderment at how Broomhilda's Russel Myers gets away with some outrageous things, is Trudeau's "Doonesbury," despite his Xerox-copy techniques of drawing. I also find occasion to laugh at "The Wizard Of Id."

I admit that in my effete, intellectual snob opinion, DC's PLOP! did just that as far as humor goes. People who take their cartoons seriously six days a week do not miraculously develop a sense of satire about them on the seventh, which, unfortunately, is apparently what DC expects from its artists and writers. What they end up with is not satire, but the very worst aspects of whatever books they are trying to satirize.

In the field of satire, much as I hate to admit it, National Lampoon has done some excellent comic book satires. Unfortunately, the rest of their output is sheer sick garbage; perhaps this is because they operate out of New York which has enough garbage for the rest of the nation. Their "Funny Pages" aren't too bad either, especially if you don't mind some overt eroticism in your comics. If nothing else, Lampoon has refined the sex-and-violence format into a saleable package.

I definitely would like to see some more good comic book satires, wherever they may originate, and I long for the comeback of COMICS!

* * *

1976 Comic Art Fan Awards
Nominating Ballot

This is the fifteenth year of the Comic Art Fan Awards; it is for newsstand work dated 1975 and for non-newsstand work published or copyrighted 1975. This ballot may appear in any fanzine, but must be copied exactly, without any omissions or additions.

Due to ballot stuffing in the past, we are forced to accept official ballots only and not count facsimiles. If you cannot acquire a ballot, we will send you an official ballot--providing you send us a Self-Addressed, Stamped Envelope. No request that doesn't contain an SASE will be honored. Send your request to:

1976 Comic Art Fan Awards
Mark Gasper
32-25 167th Street
Flushing, N.Y. 11358

Please send all correspondence and ballots to the above address no later than March 31, 1976.

Any votes cast for work which did not appear in 1975 will be considered invalid and will not be counted. Please check to make sure your votes are only for work dated 1975. You are permitted only one vote, any suspected duplications will not be tabulated. And you are only permitted one vote per category, any category containing more than one choice will not be tabulated. The top ten choices in each category will be printed on the final ballot in addition to write-in, abstain and no award choices.

Final ballots will be mailed as fast as possible to a large number of fanzines. In addition, final ballots will be available for an SASE. Your suggestions are welcome and encouraged. As always, our records are open to responsible persons who wish to double-check the results.

Now that we have a year's experience behind us, we hope the awards have improved. This format is an attempt to gain a greater response and as such restore the fan awards to their former high status. We eagerly await the results of this experiment and we welcome any suggestions you may have on how to further improve the awards. Thank you for your cooperation and happy voting!

Mark Gasper and Ken Gale, Awards Administrators

Please write or type legibly. Vote for work dated 1975 only. Please read the other page to avoid wasting votes.

1. Favorite pro writer*_____
2. Favorite pro penciller*_____
3. Favorite pro inker*_____
4. Favorite pro editor*_____
5. Favorite comic book story (stories in category 8 are eligible. In a series, vote for favorite part. If a story extends for more than one issue, but is obviously a single story (which must be three issues or less) you may vote for all issues.)

_____

6. Favorite newsstand comic (any kind -- love, humor, etc., B&W or color. Vote for title, not issue number.)

_____

7. Favorite comic book character (group member, solo or supporting. Those from category 8 are eligible.)

_____

8. Favorite non-newsstand comic (Any comic art not appearing widely on newsstands: fanzines with much comic art by pros, underground comix, mail-order art, reprinted professional work, etc.)

_____

9. Favorite fanzine (Any comics-related non-newsstand publication, small or large circulation, printed or dittoed, articlezine, adzine, newsletter, etc. Most of its content must be done by non-professionals. Vote for title not issue number.)

_____

10. Favorite fan writer (Letterhack or text writer, editor, scripter of amateur work or underground comix; based on material in categories 8 and 9.)

_____

11. Favorite fan artist (Spot illustrator, strip or underground artist; based on work in categories 8 and 9.)

_____

12. Favorite new talent (Any professional who has entered the comic industry since January, 1974.)_____

Name and age_____

Address_____

_____

Source of ballot Mark Gisper Pgh Fan Forum

Signature_____

*Based on work published in magazines which appear widely on newsstands.

'All Around'

column by Ben Pondexter

Imagine talking about science fiction at a science fiction con! But we did at the last PghLange convention and had a great time doing it. Hotel space was nice, and for once we were all booked on the same floor. ***Thoughts about the Hillman Library Show: though I wish more people had brought items to sell or trade, we did have a good time with Frank Rizzo and members of the Ashtabula Comics Club -- we hope to do more with this group, and plan an exhange visit or two. Nice to have Jim Coon in for a weekend, who took advantage of the time to have his costume for PITTCON '76 fitted. Spent a lot of time at the special session videotaping for Dave Zema's videotape project; lots of help from Bill Malzon and Kit Adams received. We're looking forward to seeing the tape!

I haven't seen enough of SPACE: 1999 to judge the show, but I do feel everyone is being too hard on it. It is leading its time period in most markets. It's not STAR TREK, but then, what could be? ***The script for the Spiderman movie is being written by Brian Clemens, with the possibility they'll do the film in 3-D or as a rock opera! Oh, my, oh, my....**** As for the Vampirella paperbacks, I wish they'd gone for original stories rather than adapting the black-and-white tales. Many key points were lost in going from one medium to another.

The Star Trek Convention held here in Pittsburgh in December may have set fandom back ten years. However, for once the P.C.C. made some money, not to mention public relations successes. ****If you'll be able to put up some out-of-town members for the weekend of PITTCON '76, please let me know. More people will come if they can save a little money. **** I was impressed with one of Russ Manning's answers in his MENOMONEE FALLS GAZETTE interview. When Shel Dorf asked how many people he was reaching with his Tarzan, he replied, about one-tenth of those who read it. I feel the same about many parts of P.F.F.

The settlement between Siegel and Schuster and Warner Communications, over the rights to the Superman character, was a genuinely good thing. But what's really needed is revision of the whole system of giving up rights to a character. Few people are as smart (or lucky) as Will Eisner who still holds the Spirit. ***There are two new Dick Tracy paperbacks out from Fawcett at $1.25 each. You can't go wrong, but looking at the old stuff makes you realize how far downhill the strip has come. ****The real Robin Hood, from Barry Smith's Gorblimey Press, should be worth waiting for! ***The first issue of B.B. COMICS, which I am editing, will have only ten pages, but it'll contain two stories, a cover by Bob Logan, and will be priced under a dollar. Look for it!

* * *

X-MEN Funnies!
AS THEIR NEWEST MEMBER, I SSSTRIKE TO AVENGE THE ANI-MEN!
AH... PLEASE TO EXCUSE, BUT IS THAT "ANT-MEN?
NO... ITSSS ANI-MEN - SSSEE? LIKE, ЖИВОТНОЕ-ЧЕЛОВЕК
OH!
RUSSIAN TO ENGLISH
THEN, WHAT MEANS ЗВЕРЬ?
WELL, IT'SSS SSSIMILAR TO THE OTHER FORM OF MEN-ANIMALSS, LIKE THISSS ONE HERE...
emerey